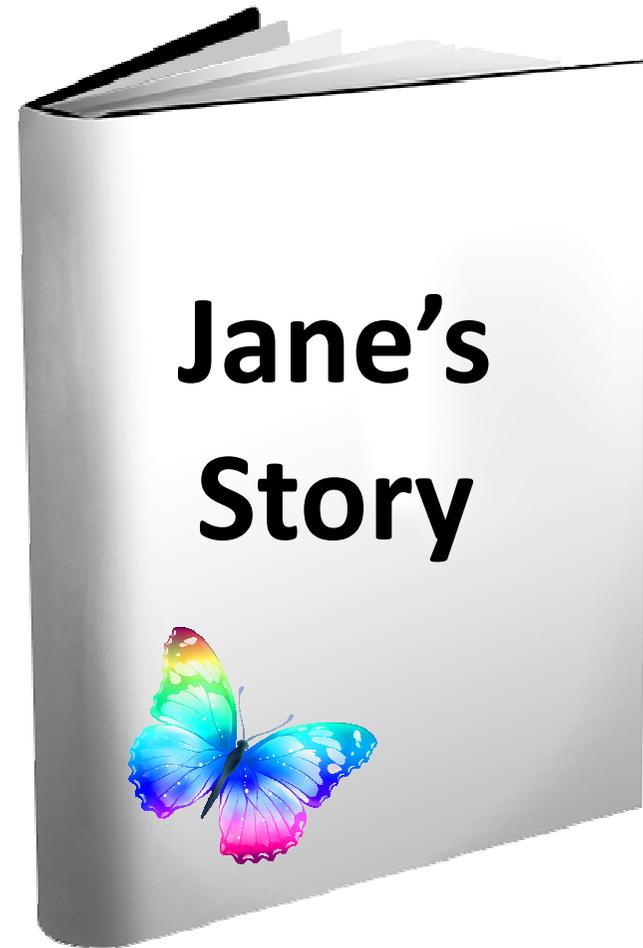


The coping skills group I've been to has helped me a lot. It's given me more understanding about the problem. It's given me a wider look. I would love to help other people. If I could listen to them maybe I could help them find a strategy that works for them. I would love to do that. I'm so grateful for the support that I've had from everybody. This is the first time I've ever opened up to anybody.



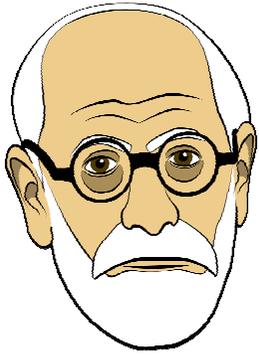
People need to listen to what you've got to say and then people know it's ok to speak and they won't live in a shell like I did. You need to stretch your boundaries, a little bit at a time.

I never thought this time last year I could talk about how I feel. I never did. I feel so free inside, like a new person. I couldn't wish for anything more, I'm very happy.



**I want my story to help other people who might be going through the same thing and struggling, like I was struggling.**

**I can tell you in detail how it was for me. I can tell you every word how I really felt.**



I've had psychiatry treatment from when I was a little girl. I was under a doctor up till I was 20 and he said to my mum that if she didn't show me what to do I would be like a cabbage in the chair. I wouldn't be able to talk; I wouldn't be able to do anything. My mum told me this.

He said "you'll have to show her what to do" and every time she showed me I picked it up. Things like ironing when I was little. I learnt the skills with my mum. She taught me to speak, how to laugh – I didn't know how to laugh. She encouraged me to laugh otherwise I wouldn't laugh. There are lots of things I struggled with.

My mum died. It will be 2 years this August. She was 97 when she died and me and my brother looked after her. We were always together, never apart. My brother told me the family couldn't have anything to do with me because I've got to be kept quiet.

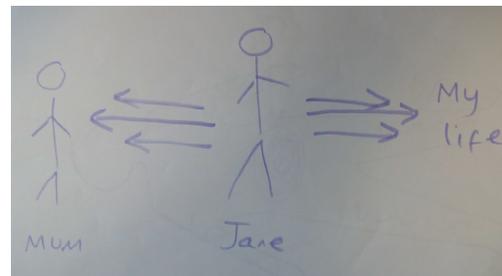
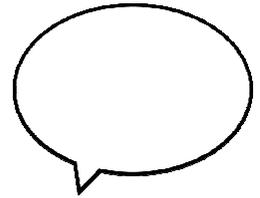
I used to have fits and I used to scream in them. I didn't know that till my brother told me. He said "they had to keep me calm".



I'm important, I believe in myself now and I'm a person who is getting better and better. Everything I do is just lovely. I'm just so happy. I used to be sad but now I have targets every day to do. I used to feel I would die but now I say "I won't die" and just go and do it and that's how I overcome it when I realised I didn't die. It just clicks and it feels tremendous, such a happy feeling.



I have carers at night time and they talk to me and say "what have you been doing today" and I tell them all about what I've been doing and then I sleep all night. I used to have loads of nightmares because I was so anxious and frightened.



I wanted to do what other people were doing but I was held back. I couldn't go forward but now I can go forward. It's like a big pressure has gone and I can tell my story how I really feel.

It's important to me that I tell people how I really, really feel and how I can help other people overcome it.

When I moved into Rowlands Lodge I started to get better. When I used to go home to my mum it was awful, I'd be taunted because my mum wanted me to go home at weekends and I'd want to stay at Rowlands Lodge.



That's why I was frustrated, they never told me much and I'm just learning about it now when I'm asking the questions. The anniversary of my mum's death triggered it off, depression.



I was very upset about my mum, angry, bitter. I blamed myself for lots of things. I blamed myself for her death. I used to live in fear and I blamed myself for everything. It was just terrible.

But I'd be taunted because I thought if I don't go home my mum wouldn't love me. I didn't know what to do, that's why my nerves were so bad. I had no confidence and I didn't think I was good at all. I felt desperate.



I started to see a psychologist and she started to get me to do little things. I was doing these challenges she was telling me to do and it worked out. She said to try and do a little challenge each day, just step out your boundary and that's what I did.



I think people need to know how it feels and to help reverse it. Parents with children like me. I know it's a big thing but I'd be over the moon if I could change things for some people. I now understand my mum had her reasons.

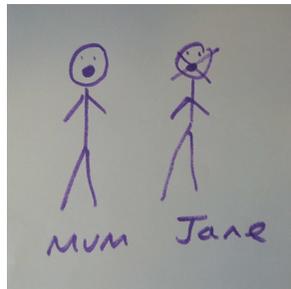
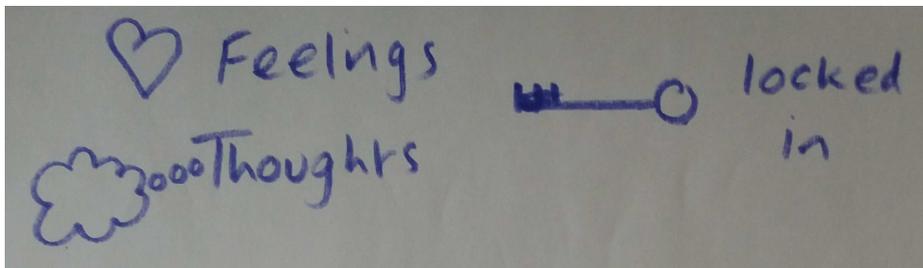
After that time with her I felt confident, I'd got over that bit. I felt I could cope that week. When I was really bad I thought I can cope till the next week. I'd get upset and angry, then it started getting less and less until I said to her "right it's alright about my mum now, I understand now". We moved to the next bit of my life with my mum and I talked about how it used to be.



When I was at home I was too frightened to talk because I didn't want to upset anyone. I was frightened to tell anyone, didn't know who to go to, didn't know who to talk to. I didn't know how to talk to people. I used to sit with my head bent and I wouldn't look up.

I was that scared. I just lived in a shell, like a dark shell. I was frustrated, I wanted to be like them, to be involved but they wouldn't involve me. I could never talk to my family about it because I didn't know how to talk. They didn't give me enough confidence to talk when I was younger.

I felt alone. I felt very guilty, very shy, angry, nervous and really scared, but scared of my own feelings. I started to think if I did things I would die.



I still get that today but I'm overcoming that. I've got to overcome it and do my best. I challenge myself and then I think "I'm fine I've got over that". I had to challenge myself as I wanted to speak out; I wanted to tell people how I felt. I was just so scared incase it got back to my mum. I couldn't take that pressure.

I thought when I was little we were all the same. I thought everyone was ill like me. It must be the normal thing to be like this. So it was very confusing and as the years went by I had different challenges and I had to cope with a lot, especially as I got older.

My mum was very demanding.



It was as if she wanted me as a little girl as she didn't want me to grow up. I wanted to be like other people, move out and see what it was like.

I was between 20 and 30 years behind, that's what staff told me.

